

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SANTO 02616 160150Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 /073 W
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P R 152230Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 455
INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 2616

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PINT, DR
SUBJECT: GODR DENIES ENTRY TO UPI CORRESPONDENT

1. LATE SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY 13, UPI CARIBBEAN SPECIALIST
PIETER VAN BENNEKOM, DUTCH NATIONAL ASSIGNED TO COVER MAY 16
ELECTION, WAS DETAINED ON ARRIVAL AT LAS AMERICAS AIRPORT BY
GODR SECURITY AUTHORITIES. HE WAS ALLOWED ONE TELEPHONE CALL,
TO HIS BUREAU IN SAN JUAN, AND THEN DEPORTED ON CDA RETURN
FLIGHT TO SAN JUAN.

2. ON HEARING OF INCIDENT, INITIALLY SECONDHAND AND WITHOUT
KNOWING LATEST STATUS OF SITUATION, DCM PHONED CHIEF OF CONSULAR
AFFAIRS OF FOREIGN SECRETARIAT TO INQUIRE AS TO FACTS, TO URGE
GODR TO STAY ANY ACTION AGAINST UPI REPORTER UNTIL SITUATION
CLARIFIED, AND TO NOTE UNFAVORABLE IMAGE THAT WOULD BE CREATED
IN US BY DENYING ENTRY TO CORRESPONDENT OF US WIRE SERVICE
TO REPORT ON ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

3. LATER IN THE EVENING, JUAN WALTE, UPI WASHINGTON BUREAU,
CALLED E9FF FROM WASHINGTON TO SAY UPI NY WAS ASKING
EXPLANATION OF VAN BENNEKOM'S DEPORTATION AND WANTED GODR
TO KNOW UPI WAS SENDING TWO OTHER CORRESPONDENTS INTO SANTO
DOMINGO THE FOLLOWING DAY. WALTE SAID UPI HOPED DCM'S
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SANTO 02616 160150Z

DEMARCHE WOULD PREVENT FURTHER TROUBLE.

4. SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 14, AFTER RECEIVING PHONE CALLS FROM
UPI BUREAU CHIEF IN SAN JUAN CONCERNING SCHEDULED ARRIVAL
TWT AFTERNOON OF TWO OTHER UPI CORRESPONDENTS, DCM AND PUBLIC
AFFAIRS OFFICER, RESPECTIVELY, ATTEMPTED TO REACH FOREIGN
OFFICE AND PALACE OFFICIALS TO URGE THAT NO IMPEDIMENT BE

PLACED ON ENTRY OF THESE CORRESPONDENTS. HOWEVER, NO CONTACT COULD BE MADE WITH THESE DOMINICAN OFFICIALS SINCE THEY WERE OFF ON REFORMISTA CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES. DCM THEN PHONED CARIBE DIRECTOR ORNES (FORMER HEAD OF PRESS FREEDOM COMMITTEE OF INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION), WHO IS WIRED INTO PALACE, TO DISCUSS SITUATION WITH HIM. ORNES WAS FAMILIAR WITH SITUATION AND INDICATED HE UNDERSTOOD FROM PALACE SOURCES THAT IMPEDIMENT WAS PERSONALLY DIRECTED AGAINST VAN BENNEKOM, NOT AGAINST UPI, THAT PALACE WAS AWARE OF FORTHCOMING ARRIVAL OF TWO OTHER UPI CORRESPONDENTS, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE PERMITTED TO ENTER THE COUNTRY.

5. IN ORDER OBTAIN FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE, AS NECESSARY, AMBASSADOR YOST SENT EMBASSY DUTY OFFICER TO AIRPORT TO MEET FIRST-ARRIVING UPI CORRESPONDENT SUNDAY AFTERNOON. UPI CORRESPONDENT, WITH DUTY OFFICER ASSISTANCE, PASSED THROUGH IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS WITHOUT DIFFICULTY, AND WE ARE AWARE OF NO FURTHER INCIDENTS. SECOND CORRESPONDENT WAS DUE TO ARRIVE SOME TIME TODAY.

6. COMMENT: WE ARE NOT CONVINCED BY EXPLANATION PROVIDED TO US FOR GODR'S EXPULSION OF VAN BENNEKOM, THAT HE WAS PERSONAL NON GRATA BECAUSE HE HAD "BAD"RECORD" OF BEING EXPELLED FROM COLOMBIA AND ECUADOR, AND HAD ENTRY IMPEDIMENT AGAINST HIM IN ARGENTINA. IT SEEMS MORE PLAUSIBLE THAT GOVERNMENT WAS MOTIVATED TO TAKE TAKE DEPORTATION ACTION BY DISMAY
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PAGE 03 SANTO 02616 160150Z

AT UPI REPORT OF MAY 9, PUBLISHED BY PRD-LINING EL SOL (AND NO OTHER UPI SUBSCRIBER HERE) WHICH WAS HIGHLY UNFLATTERING TO BALAGUER PERSONALLY AND CALLED INTO QUESTION CERTAINTY OF HIS REELECTION. THAT DISPATCH, WRITTEN BY UPI SAN JUAN BUREAU, SAID THE PRESIDENT IS AT LEAST HALF-BLIND, THAT HE CANNOT READ OR EVEN SEE OFFICIAL DICUMENTS WHICH HE MUST SIGN, AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY THE MILITARY IS SHOT THROUGH WITH CORRUPTION. WE HAVE IT ON RELIABLE AUTHORITY THAT PALACE, OVER-REACTING TO PRESIDENT'S IRE OVER MAY 9 REPORT, ORDERED VAN BENNEKOM OUT AND EVEN CONSIDERED BANNING ALL FOREIGN PRESS DURING ELECTORAL PERIOD. BALAGUER'S VISION PROBLEM AND PREVALENT CORRUPTION IN HIS GOVERNMENT, WHILE WELL KNOWN, ARE SUBJECT ALLUDED TO IN DOMINICAN MEDIA ONLY IN THE MOST DELICATE WAYS, IF AT ALL.
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